What Is Claimed:

1.   A method of detecting stopwords in a query comprising:

identifying a potential stopword in the query based on a comparison to a list of stopwords;

generating a plurality of sets of context data based on the query and the potential stopword;

comparing the sets of context data; and

classifying the potential stopword as an actual stopword based on the comparing.

2.   The method of claim 1, further comprising:

rewriting the query to remove the actual stopword from the query.

3.   The method of claim 1, wherein the potential stopword includes a plurality of stopwords and each of the plurality of sets of context data corresponds to a combination of the potential stopwords.

4.   The method of claim 1, wherein comparing the sets of context data includes comparing the sets of context data to one another to determine whether various ones of the plurality of sets of context data are substantially similar.

5.   The method of claim 1, wherein generating the plurality of sets of context data includes:

generating a first set of context data from the query; and

generating a second set of context data from a version of the query in which the potential stopword is removed.

6.   The method of claim 1, wherein generating the plurality of sets of context data includes:

deriving a plurality of second queries from the query and the potential stopword; and

querying a database using the plurality of second queries.

7.   The method of claim 6, wherein querying the database includes issuing the plurality of second queries to a search engine, and wherein the potential stopword includes a plurality of potential stopwords and the plurality of second queries are derived from combinations of the potential stopwords plus terms in the query that are not potential stopwords.

8.   The method of claim 1, wherein generating the plurality of sets of context data includes:

deriving a plurality of second queries from the query and the potential stopword; and

locating categories relevant to the second queries using a category generator.

9.   The method of claim 8, wherein the potential stopword includes a plurality of potential stopwords and plurality of second queries are derived from

combinations of the potential stopwords plus terms in the query that are not potential stopwords.

10.   The method of claim 1, wherein the potential stopword includes a stop-phrase.

11.   A method comprising:

identifying potential stopwords in a query;

generating context data based on the query and the potential stopwords; and

rewriting the query to remove one or more of the potential stopwords that do not substantially affect the generation of the context data.

12.   The method of claim 11, wherein generating the context data includes:

retrieving a plurality of sets of context data in which each said set corresponds to a different combination of the potential stopwords.

13.   The method of claim 12, further comprising:

comparing the plurality of sets of context data to one another to determine whether various ones of the plurality of sets of context data are substantially similar,

wherein rewriting the query to remove one or more of the potential stopwords that do not substantially affect the generation of the context data is based on the comparison of the plurality of sets of context data.

14.   The method of claim 11, wherein generating the context data includes:

generating a first set of context data as context data derived from the query; and

generating a second set of context data as context data derived from a version of the query in which one or more potential stopwords are removed.

15.   The method of claim 11, wherein generating the context data includes:

deriving a plurality of second queries from the query and the potential stopwords; and

querying a database using the plurality of second queries.

16.   The method of claim 15, wherein the plurality of second queries are derived from combinations of the potential stopwords plus terms in the query that are not potential stopwords.

17.   The method of claim 11, wherein generating the context data includes:

deriving a plurality of second queries from the query and the potential stopwords; and

issuing the plurality of second queries to a category generator to locate categories relevant to the second queries.

18.   The method of claim 17, wherein the plurality of second queries are derived from combinations of the potential stopwords plus terms in the query that are not potential stopwords.

19.   The method of claim 11, wherein identifying the potential stopwords includes:

matching terms in the query to a pre-defined list of stopwords.

20.   The method of claim 11, wherein the potential stopwords include potential stopwords and stop-phrases.

21.   A system comprising:

a parser component configured to receive a search query and identify potential stopwords in the search query;

a context generation component to generate context data based on the search query and the potential stopwords; and

a comparator component to compare the context data to determine those of the potential stopwords that effected generation of the context data.

22.   The system of claim 21, wherein, when the comparator determines that one or more of the potential stopwords do not substantially effect generation of the context data, the search query is rewritten to a form that does not include the one or more of the potential stopwords that do not substantially affect generation of the context data.

23.   The system of claim 21, wherein the context generation component includes a search engine.

24. The system of claim 23, wherein the comparator component compares sets of documents returned from the search engine to determine those of the potential stopwords that affect generation of the context data.

25. The system of claim 21, wherein the context generation component includes a category generator configured to locate category lists relevant to a search query.

26. The system of claim 25, wherein the comparator component compares category lists to one another to determine those of the potential stopwords that affect generation of the context data.

27. A device comprising:

means for identifying potential stopwords in a query;

means for generating context data based on the query and the potential stopwords; and

means for rewriting the query to remove those of the potential stopwords that do not substantially effect generation of the context data.

28. The device of claim 27, further comprising:

means for searching a document index to locate a set of documents and return the set of documents to the means for generating context data.

29.   The device of claim 27, further comprising:

means for locating a list of categories relevant to an input category query

and returning the list of categories to the means for generating context data.

30.   A computer-readable medium containing instructions for causing a

processor to perform a method, the computer-readable medium comprising:

instructions for identifying potential stopwords in a query;

instructions for retrieving context data based on the query and the .

potential stopwords; and

instructions for rewriting the query to remove those of the potential

stopwords that do not substantially effect retrieving of the context data.

31.   A document retrieval system comprising:

a search engine configured to:

receive a user search query,

receive rewritten versions of the search query that exclude

stopwords not material to an intended result of the search query, and

perform a search of a document index based on the rewritten

versions of the search query; and

a stopword detection component to rewrite the search query, the stopword

detection component including:

a parser component configured to receive the user search query

and identify potential stopwords in the search query;

a context generation component to generate context data based on the search query and the potential stopwords; and

a comparator component to compare the context data to determine those of the potential stopwords that affect the context data.